

Virginia State University Online Student Handbook



July 2023

Table of Contents

Virginia State University Online Student Handbook	1
Virginia State University (VSU) Distance Education Overview	4
VSU Online Student Handbook Purpose Statement	4
VSU Online Mission	4
State Approval and Regional Accreditation	5
VSU Distance Education Modes of Delivery	5
Online Programs and Courses	6
Success as a VSU Online Student	7
VSU Online Technology	7
VSU’s Learning Management Systems	8
PREPARE	8
PARTICIPATE	9
ENGAGE	9
Regular and Substantive Interactions in Online Courses	10
Availability and Communication with Faculty and Office Hours	10
Faculty Response Time	10
VSU Online Student Resources and Services	11
VSU Registrar’s Office	11
VSU Financial Aid	11
VSU Career Services	11
VSU Student Accessibility Office	12
VSU Counseling Center	12
VSU Policies	12
Student Complaints	12
Tuition	12
Online Credit Hours	12
Learning Management System Course Storage	12
Distance Education Technology	13
Brainfuse	13
LinkedIn Learning	13
Panopto	13

Grammarly 13
MyMajors 14
Appendix A – Important VSU Office of Distance Education Links 15

Virginia State University (VSU) Distance Education Overview



Distance education is a planned teaching/learning experience in which teachers and students are separated by physical distance. Teacher-student interaction occurs through multiple modalities of existing and evolving media.

Distance education requires special course design techniques, instructional techniques, assessment, and methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as unique organization and administrative arrangements.

VSU Online Student Handbook Purpose Statement

Distance education provides learning opportunities that are not restricted by method, time, or place. As a VSU Online student, there are requirements, procedures, habits, and skills you must implement to be a successful online student. Matriculation within VSU distance education programs and courses takes place in the context of the policies and procedures of the University and all existing academic programs.

To achieve this goal, Virginia State University's distance education guidelines and operating procedures serve two purposes:

1. Provide Virginia State University Online guidelines, and practices to assist students with successful online matriculation in fully online programs or a la carte course.
2. Introduce resources available to VSU Online students

VSU Online Mission

VSU Online implements the University's mission of preparing a diverse population of men and women through the advancement of academic programs and services that integrate instruction, research, extension, and outreach by supporting opportunities for students to enroll in online academic degree programs, certificates, and online offerings through the use of sound distance learning methodologies, tools, and operational practices.

Virginia State University's (VSU) Office of Distance Education manages the operations, infrastructure, support, and online program and course development of distance education at VSU.

State Approval and Regional Accreditation



Virginia State University has approval to offer online degree programs from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (**SACSCOC**). As a result, all accreditation policies, program development, implementation guidelines, and notifications are implemented in VSU online courses.

[SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#)

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Distance Education Definition

According to the United States Department of Education, distance education is education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include the internet, one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices, audio conference, or other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the listed technologies.

VSU Distance Education Modes of Delivery

Online instructional delivery modes require **regular and substantive interaction (RSI)**. The U.S. Department of Education requires this for all distance education forms of delivery available at Virginia State University, including:

Asynchronous: Online Courses offered via the Internet using a Learning Management System (LMS), where instructors and students interact within the course at different times. However, there is a set schedule for learning activities and assessments.

Hybrid: Combines face-to-face classroom instruction with distance education activities. These courses blend face-to-face and online pedagogies.

Synchronous: Real-time instruction and learning activities via web conferencing allow the instructor to communicate with remote students via two-way audio/video. Instructors and students participate in class instruction live at the same time. VSU uses synchronous online courses for emergency remote instruction or as approved by the Office of Distance Education for individual situations.

Hyflex: Instructional approach that combines online and face-to-face learning, with each class session offered in-person, synchronously via web conferencing, and asynchronously. The Hyflex delivery model focuses on student flexibility for success.

Online Programs and Courses



Virginia State University offers fully online degree programs and a la carte online courses.

Fully Online Programs

the online delivery modality have to obtain internal and external accreditor approvals. As a result, in order to be a student matriculating in one of VSU's fully online programs, you must be officially enrolled in a VSU accreditor approved online program.

A la Carte Online Courses

- VSU academic programs offer a la carte courses. According to SACSCOC accreditation requirements, a face-to-face program cannot provide 50% or more of an existing program's courses online without a SACSCOC substantive change notification. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) requires a change in modality (hybrid or online) if more than 24% of a program's courses are delivered online. Additionally, SCHEV requires that programs not approved as fully online continue to offer students face-to-face options for program courses.
- All online courses should follow Quality Matters Higher Ed course design standards.

Virginia State University's schedule of classes, maintained by the [VSU Registrar's Office](#), indicates which courses are offered via the distance education delivery format.

VSU Online SCHEV & SACSCOC Accreditor Approved Fully Online Programs

- Bachelor of Science, Nursing (RN to B.S.N. only)
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Hospitality Management
- Master of Social Work (MSW)
- Master of Social Work - Advanced Standing (MSW)
- Master of Education (M.Ed.), Special Education Concentration
- Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Administration & Supervision
- Homefront Readjustment for the Armed Forces (Certificate)
- Graduate Certificate in Educational Administration and Supervision

Success as a VSU Online Student



Students, your academic success is an essential part of your experience as a VSU Trojan. Preparation, participation, and engagement in your online courses are the keys to your success. View the information below to ensure that you are successful.

VSU Online Technology

VSU Online should have their own or access to a computer and the internet to access their online classes and complete assignments.

Review the VSU Technology Help Desk page, Hardware Requirements section to ensure your computer is compatible with course and VSU technology, [VSU Technology Help Desk](#)

Technology tools used to support VSU distance education courses are supported by VSU Technology Services. Tool issues should be reported to VSU Technology Services for resolution.

Start your journey as a successful online student by ensuring your VSU user name, password, and email address are set up.

VSU Technology Services (VTS) Topics

For students

- [Student Email](#)
- [Blackboard Learn](#)
- [Banner Self Service](#)
- [Password Reset](#)
- [Getting Started with VTS](#)

For faculty/staff

- [Faculty/Staff Email](#)
- [Banner Self Service](#)
- [Banner INB](#)
- [Password Reset](#)
- [Getting Started with VTS](#)

VSU Technology Services Contact Information:

Phone: 804-524-5210

[VTS ServiceNow Portal](#)

VSU's Learning Management Systems



VSU uses the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver online courses. Your instructor will use Blackboard for each class to provide instruction, class information, and content.

Faculty and Students in both online and face-to-face classes can access their course shell in Blackboard.

Blackboard

Use your VSU username and password to access the Blackboard Learning Management System

Click the link below to access Blackboard. Use your VSU ID and password to log in:

[BLACKBOARD LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM \(LMS\)](#)

Need help using Blackboard? Watch the videos at the link below:

[Blackboard Tutorials](#)

Now that you know how to obtain your VSU account and access the Blackboard LMS, take a look at how to PREPARE, PARTICIPATE, ENGAGE, and use learning resources. Select each section below to learn more information to help you succeed in your online classes

PREPARE

- Ensure you can log into your online courses and how to get help.
- Know your Active Directory user name and password used for access to VSU systems
- Enroll in the Self-Service Reset Password Management program (SSRPM), which will give you the ability to reset your VSU Network password. Go to <https://reset.vsu.edu> and select Enroll into SSRPM.
- Bookmark VSU's Learning Management System: Blackboard
- Check functionality of devices used to access remote instruction (ex. Do they work? Do they support the software/programs needed to connect to Blackboard?).

Note: The use of mobile devices to participate in your online courses is not recommended.

- Ensure access to reliable internet connectivity at home/ out of home locations (ex. local public library, Panera Bread, McDonald's, family/friends, etc.)
- Contact the VSU Student Technology Help Desk if needed:

Help Ticket Submission: <https://vsusnprod.service-now.com/sp>

Phone: 804-524-5210

Contact the **TROJAN SOS** group to help you locate points of contact and support as you navigate your courses and online instruction. If you need assistance, do not hesitate to contact TROJANSOS@VSU.EDU

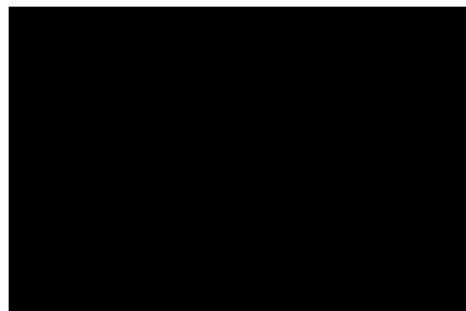
PARTICIPATE

- Ensure that you actively participate and stay up to date in your online courses
- Check DAILY for emails from your professor / from Blackboard courses.
- Check Junk Mail folders /Clutter folders DAILY for misdirected emails.
- Review each professor's Blackboard site for instructions.
- Keep course materials handy (ex. textbooks, study guides, and other course materials you were using before the transition to remote instruction)
- Practice with any apps your professor requires for participating in online activities (ex. instructional videos, Zoom Meetings, YOUTUBE videos, Respondus Lockdown Browser & Monitor, etc.)
- Be Self-disciplined - Take responsibility for completing tasks/posting assignments on time.

ENGAGE

- Be organized – Map out time to be online. Make a calendar of assignment due dates.
- Be present!! (Log in frequently – Attendance still counts!!!)
- Ask questions and engage your professors – Remember that this is YOUR educational experience. Be an ACTIVE learner.
- Schedule an online tutor if needed. **VSU provides Brainfuse 24/7 Online Tutoring free of charge.** Access Brainfuse online tutoring in your online course by clicking Tools or from the Blackboard Home page.

Find out more by reviewing tips in the video below, **Study Tips to Succeed as an Online Student**



Regular and Substantive Interactions in Online Courses

The U.S. Department of Education requires that all online courses for which students may use Title IV funds (federal financial aid) include regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors. Regular and substantive interaction (RSI) is one of the critical elements distinguishing distance education from correspondence education and, thus, one of the central determinates for students' ability to use Title IV funds.

Regular and substantive interaction (RSI) must occur on a predictable and regular basis, should be instructor initiated focused on the course content, and there must be monitoring of students' academic engagement and intervention when appropriate.

As a VSU Online student, you must regularly participate in your online course by logging in, completing assignments, participating in discussion boards or other interactive activities, and staying in contact with your VSU online course instructor.



Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) Dashboard Illustration, courtesy of SUNY Online

Availability and Communication with Faculty and Office Hours

As Virginia State University requires, each instructor maintains office hours weekly during each semester to accommodate student instructional or remediation needs. Your online instructors' post Office Hours on their syllabus **and** within the Blackboard learning management system. Online instructors may use various modes of synchronous online communication (e.g., Zoom, email, phone, Learning Management System tools, etc.).

Faculty Response Time

Instructors teaching online courses should respond to student inquiries (whether by email, phone, messaging, etc.) within 24 - 48 hours.

VSU Online Student Resources and Services



As a VSU Online student you have access to many of the departments and services that traditional campus students have. However, services are available virtually. If you are local to the Petersburg/Richmond Virginia area, you are welcome to come to campus to participate in activities, conduct business, and use campus resources.

**VSU University policies apply to both traditional and online students.

As a student enrolled in a fully online program, you will never be asked to come to campus, unless it is a requirement stated in your program description, as approved by VSU's accreditors.

Use the links below to obtain information and access to various University Services

VSU Registrar's Office

The VSU Office of the Registrar is dedicated to providing the best possible service to meet the needs of our students, faculty and staff in a professional and courteous manner. A full spectrum of student services are provided to include assurance of integrity confidentiality, while complying with all federal, state and University policies; security of academic records, certifying student enrollment, degree and diploma processing; availability of course offerings each semester; coordinate registration and commencement exercises; preparing official university transcripts; and performing other academic administration responsibilities.

<https://www.vsu.edu/registrar/>

VSU Financial Aid

VSU Financial Aid Office has systems in place to make sure our students are aware of potential HBCU financial aid opportunities, as well as the procedures to apply for that aid.

<https://www.vsu.edu/financial-aid/>

VSU Career Services

Virginia State University Career Services is dedicated to helping VSU students and alumni with exploring career options and empowering them to achieve their career and educational goals. Our goal is to provide the highest quality of service and opportunities for our students, alumni, employers, faculty, staff, parents and the community.

<https://www.vsu.edu/career-services/>

VSU Student Accessibility Office

The Student Accessibility Office (SAO) provides services to University students who meet program guidelines. To become eligible for services, documentation of the disability from a qualified professional must be provided upon request.

<https://www.vsu.edu/student-life/support-and-resources/students-with-disabilities/>

VSU Counseling Center

The VSU University Counseling Center (UCC) is committed to excellence and believes in the value of the whole student. We strive to be student-centered and to remove barriers to student success. University Counseling Center values individual and cultural differences with a commitment to human rights and equality. We embrace innovative clinical services, training of emerging mental health professionals, and research-based clinical practice.

<https://www.vsu.edu/counseling/>

VSU Policies

Student Complaints

Virginia State University strives to provide quality instruction. The University has policies to ensure VSU students can give feedback and complaints in various areas, including instances where the University cannot deliver instruction. Additionally, the VSU Provost's Office provides communication and additional guidance if VSU can no longer offer instruction for a course or program.

VSU has a robust *Student Complaint Policy* with detailed steps for resolution. Should the resolution of a student's complaint require the need for a tuition refund, the *VSU Student Guide for Tuition, Fee, and Other Financial Information* provides tuition refund guidelines (Page 20).

VSU Student Complaint Policy

<https://www.vsu.edu/files/docs/student-complaint-form.pdf>

Tuition

Currently, all distance education courses at Virginia State University are assessed tuition based on the [University's tuition and fee schedule](#). This is subject to change.

Online Credit Hours

Virginia State University follows the [SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement](#) based on the federal definition of the credit hour. The policy also applies to distance education delivery.

Learning Management System Course Storage

Storage of VSU courses housed in the VSU Learning Management System (LMS) follows the [Library of Virginia Records Retention and Disposition Schedule GS-111's](#) guidance for course-related components. Depending on the course data or element, timeframes range from zero to five years. Using an

abundance of caution, VSU retains courses for five years from semester end. The most current 2.5 years of courses are housed on the University's LMS. The previous 2.5 years of courses are stored in VSU's Data Center for retrieval if necessary. As LMS course shells move out of the 5-year time period, the University's colleges are notified of pending removal.

Distance Education Technology

Brainfuse



- Twenty-four/seven online tutoring for students. Faculty can assign online tutoring to students. Log Into Brainfuse by going to Tools and Selecting Brainfuse
OR
- Have students schedule a tutoring session or submit a paper for feedback via the Brainfuse website, https://landing.brainfuse.com/saml.asp?oauth_consumer_key=1FCA3961

LinkedIn Learning



- The LinkedIn Learning platform provides training videos and tutorials covering a wide range of software, technologies, and business topics. You have unlimited access to learn from industry leaders all in one place from any desktop or mobile device, the ability to create personalized course recommendations, the ability to develop training paths for yourself, your VSU organization, department, or classes.
- Access LinkedIn Learning by going to <https://www.linkedin.com/learning> and signing in via your VSU email address and password.

Panopto



- Faculty use Panopto to create custom videos with interactions/quizzes embedded
- Access Panopto by logging into a course in Blackboard and selecting Tools, and Panopto

Grammarly



- Virginia State University has an enterprise license for Grammarly Premium, which entitles VSU students, faculty, and staff to use the Grammarly application to improve their writing. Grammarly will recommend changes to improve your grammar, spelling, punctuation, style, and tone on your university- and personally-owned devices, helping you to eliminate errors in your writing.
- Log into Blackboard/Help Resources to obtain the code to access a VSU Grammarly Account.

MyMajors

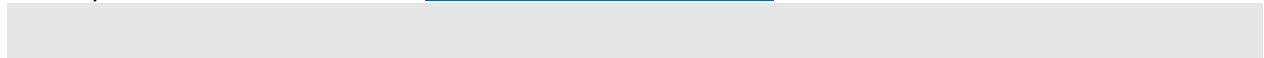


- My Majors is a tool used to guides students define their interest in careers and degree programs. Upon completion of the assessment, you will receive a report describing your interests, career suggestions, and job outlook.
- Access My Majors: <https://www.mymajors.com/college/va/virginia-state-university/>

VSU Distance Education Contact Information

Contact your online faculty member, online program coordinator, or the VSU Office of Distance Education if there are questions about your program or courses.

The department's email address is DistanceEducation@vsu.edu.



Appendix A – Important VSU Office of Distance Education Links

Important Links

[VSU Online Website](#)

[VTService Now Portal](#)

[VSU Registrar's Office](#)

[VSU Tuition and Fee Schedule](#)

[SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#)

[SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement](#)

[Library of Virginia Records Retention and Disposition Schedule GS-111](#)